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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 23, 2009

This afternoon, President Obama made phone calls to three foreign leaders and to the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Prime Harper of Canada. President Obama thanked Prime Minister Harper for his congratulations on the inauguration. He reiterated his appreciation for Canada's friendship and his commitment to travel to Canada as his first foreign visit as President. He discussed the shared challenges we face in Afghanistan, on climate change and in confronting the worsening global economy.

King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. President Obama underscored the importance of a strong U.S.-Saudi relationship. He underscored his appreciation for King Abdullah's leadership on the Arab Peace Initiative, the Interfaith Dialogue and for the pledge of assistance to the Palestinian Authority. He asked for Saudi support for efforts to stop weapons smuggling into Gaza and expressed interest in continuing counter-terrorism cooperation.

Prime Minister Brown, United Kingdom. President Obama said he looked forward to continuing and strengthening the special relationship between our two countries. He expressed his desire to work together to confront the global economic crisis and reiterated his hope to attend the G-20 Summit in London. He also discussed the situation in Gaza and the necessity to make Afghanistan a top priority.

Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary General. President Obama underscored his commitment to a strong US-UN relationship and an effective UN working with us to fight climate change, poverty and terrorism. He also voiced support for the UN's assistance mission in Iraq and his hope that the mission will expand this year and enjoy the continued leadership of the current Special Representative. They also discussed the ways in which the United Nations might undertake additional management reforms to improve efficiency and efficacy of the organization in dealing with international problems.

THE WHITE HOUSE, January 23, 2009.

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CONTACT:

Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia
Information Office
Washington, DC
www.saudiembassy.net

ABDULAZIZ MEDAL AWARDED TO MR. JOSEPH W. GRANT

WASHINGTON, [January 28, 2009] – Today, Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to the United States Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir presented the King Abdulaziz Medal - First Class to Mr. Joseph W. Grant, a U.S. World War II pilot, on behalf of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud at the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia.

Joe Grant, 100 years old, is the pilot who in 1945 flew a Douglas-DC3 aircraft to Saudi Arabia to be delivered as a gift to King Abdulaziz from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, following their historic meeting onboard the U.S.S. Quincy on February 14, 1945. Subsequently, Captain Grant served two years in the Kingdom as the first airline pilot to King Abdulaziz, founder of the modern Saudi state. Captain Grant was also instrumental in the establishment of Saudi Arabia's first national airline and the training of its pilots.

"Mr. Grant's contributions to helping foster Saudi-U.S. relations are deeply appreciated to this day," said Ambassador Al-Jubeir. "We are pleased to honor such a longstanding friend and wish him happiness and continued good health."

The King Abdulaziz Medal is awarded in recognition of significant contributions made by an individual to the Kingdom.

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